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ABSTRACT

The arguments for the monitoring and evaluation of adult literacy and basic education programs are no different from those justifying monitoring and evaluation of any other educational program. The priority and status accorded different programs are likely to determine commitment to their internal and external evaluation and the form that these take. Explanations for not identifying common procedures for monitoring and evaluation are expressed in terms of complexities at program and project levels and imply limitations of evaluative procedures. However, common procedures are conceivable for monitoring and evaluation of other, equally diverse, educational projects and programs. Therefore, it is also technically conceivable in this case. Explanations for agency and government failure to introduce systematic monitoring and evaluation procedures include lack of awareness of the relevance of monitoring for effective project execution and of the importance of evaluation to future policy formulation. Structural constraints most likely explain the infrequency and lack of system in monitoring and evaluation procedures. Evaluation schemes to date have included assessment of the acquisition of the core skills of literacy and numeracy and required careful planning. A proposed common approach to evaluation would be a process by which participants have a part in systematically reviewing all stages of a literacy or basic education project and its contribution to wider sectoral objectives. (Contains 32 references.) (YLB)

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Paper 10

THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES: TOWARDS AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH

Rosemary Preston

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THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES: TOWARDS AN INTERACTIVE APPROACH

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s and 1970s there were prodigious efforts by agencies such as Unesco and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to promote research on literacy and basic education programmes for adults. Recurrent themes in recent writing are the paucity of such research at programme and project levels and its failure to provide information for future policy about good practice and outcomes (Wagner, 1987). In the documentation associated with International Literacy Year (ILY), including the World Declaration on Education for All and the Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, is a demand for the effective monitoring and evaluation of what the Director of Unicef described as learning achievement and system performance (Grant, 1990).

Monitoring and evaluation are intrinsic to projects and critical to their transformation into sustainable activity (Imboden, 1983; GTZ, 1990). Without them, there is little chance of this occurring. With them, if well-managed, is the opportunity to improve project implementation and, if appropriate, ensure continuity.

There seems to be a case for encouraging programme sponsors to plan and use monitoring systems that are not intimidating. They should provide clear information to those concerned with individual projects, in such a way that it is accessible to others implementing similar schemes. To this end, it is argued, common approaches to monitoring and evaluation would be useful.

Prerequisites

Educational programmes and projects, even for adults, are not new, nor is there anything new about the principle of monitoring and evaluating these or any other such schemes. Therefore, before embarking on an exercise to propose procedures for monitoring and evaluation that will be applicable across a range of literacy and basic education projects and programmes, in different places and sponsored by different organisations, a series of questions have to be addressed. Three are critical.

If there is a need for such procedures:

1. Why has none already become part of common practice?

2. What would they achieve beyond that already achieved by such systems currently applied?

3. How would it be possible to ensure the widespread adoption of any new system to be developed and found appropriate?

Outline

Some answers to these questions emerge in the sections below:

I. The case for common procedures for the evaluation of literacy and basic education projects and programmes for adults.

II. The failure to adopt such procedures to date.

III. Monitoring and evaluation practices in respect of adult and basic education schemes.

IV. Projects, programmes and policies: towards a common system for evaluation.

V. Implications for the adoption of such schemes.

Terminology

Within development planning, sectoral activities are referred to as programmes. Programmes comprise multiple projects, the purpose of each one of which is to make an explicit contribution to the fulfilment of programme objectives.

Monitoring refers to the systematic and critical observation of project and programme activities as they are being implemented to make a formative evaluation of the project in question. (It should be noted that monitoring and evaluations are themselves included among project activities). The formative evaluation makes recommendations for changes to enhance the further execution of the project. The final or summative evaluation of a scheme includes a review of the processes of its implementation and an analysis of their individual and combined effects.

It may appear that the processes, system and overall structure of monitoring and evaluation are conceptually distinct from the activities they appraise. However, as with any investigation, the outcome is dependent on the methods used to obtain information. This means that process and product are inseparable and implies the need for careful understanding of what is meant by terms such as common procedures and standardisation.

By literacy is conventionally understood the ability to communicate through the written word in a range of situations and numeracy the ability to apply at least simple calculations using the four functions. Basic education implies the development of these and other skills to levels sufficient for independent use as required. More precise, internationally accepted definitions are not agreed. If anything diversification of the modes of graphic representation of language makes a common definition more remote, as does the growing recognition of literacy as a symptom of processes of social change.

I. THE CASE FOR COMMON PROCEDURES FOR THE EVALUATION OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES FOR ADULTS

Rationales and levels of monitoring and evaluation for educational projects

Comprehensive project monitoring should be designed to provide information to those concerned, at whatever level, with project design and implementation. This information should refer laterally to their

own and peer performance and, hierarchically, to the ways in which it is affected by the performance of others and to its effect on other people's performance.

In educational projects, such project level assessment of learning procedures informs students of their progress and teachers of their effectiveness, in respect of the items measured. Depending on results and explanations for them, such assessment serves in the first instance to motivate or discourage those affected. Teachers and learners performing well, according to their own criteria, will feel encouraged to continue and perhaps make greater efforts. Those performing less well, but identifying reasons for this upon which they can act, may also be motivated to continue and improve their performance in the future. Assessment can also be threatening, when teachers and learners performing at what they perceive to be below minimally satisfactory levels, without seeing ways in which to overcome their difficulties, may be sufficiently discouraged to withdraw from the scheme.

Administrators accountable to sponsoring agencies and governments, concerned to sustain project viability, also require this and other information about project performance, as well as related explanations. With appraisals of the quality of their own contributions, derived from teachers and learners and from organisational reviews conducted by national or regional level representatives, they can then plan action to change aspects of project delivery in such a way as to increase and sustain participant motivation and improve effectiveness. On the flip side, a negative appraisal can be so undermining as to kill incentive.

Educational project monitoring is concerned with the extent of skill acquisition by learners and, even at the early stages, with the effect of course participation on their lives. It appraises the quality and availability of project resources, as well as the organisational capacity required for their delivery. These would include: assessments of teacher competence and pre-service and in-service training; reviews of the appropriateness of teaching methods and material aids; analyses of the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative support (timely delivery of materials, payment of staff, responsiveness to requests for assistance, regularity of visits to centres, etc). Response to monitoring reports would be strategy to overcome defects in implementation.

The summative evaluation of educational projects takes account of monitoring and formative recommendations to measure outcomes in terms of stated project purposes. These include skill levels attained by the end of the course and the extent to which they are being used by participants immediately and after a period of time. If the time lapse is long enough, such analysis might attempt to measure the social and economic effects on local development of the use of skills derived from the course. The analysis seeks to explain these outcomes in terms of the effectiveness of project design and implementation strategies so that account might be taken of critical factors, positive and negative, which might influence the quality and effectiveness of future schemes. Such evaluation also seeks to appraise foreseen secondary effects of project intervention and to account for effects that were not foreseen.

Monitoring and evaluation in formal and non-formal education

Monitoring pupil performance in schools, through end-of-module exercises and examinations, is common practice. In countries with centralised curricula, the assessment exercises will be the same from school to school, as will any end-of-school, public examinations. The purpose of course exercises and tests is to consolidate learning and grade children according to performance, usually with serious consequences for their after-school careers. In spite of the regularity of this monitoring which, to a degree, may have standardised performance indicators within countries, there are no common international monitoring systems in respect of different levels of schooling. If there is an assumption that the completion of primary schooling in one country implies the acquisition of the same substantive and cognitive skills as in an other, there are no measures with which to confirm this. The notion does not obtain at post-primary levels, although the increasing popularity of the International Baccalaureat would indicate a demand for this, at least among elite groups with expectations that their children will follow international careers.

Typically, within countries, there are no attempts made to measure systematically the inter-relationship of affective influences and attainment within formal systems. The complexity of accounting for the influence of all process inputs and the notorious difficulty of measuring the effects of schooling on children's lives and on society as a whole, means that there are no indicators or procedures for this that are valid either across systems or cross-nationally. Instead, there is a marked tendency to use surrogate indicators which relate more to access than to outcomes.

The case for introducing common procedures for monitoring and evaluation in respect of non-formal education schemes, is logically the same as that of formal schooling. However, the incidence of either formative or summative evaluation is inconsistent. Endeavours to identify replicable procedures have been rare and, when attempted, they have been complex. Skill teaching tailored to meet the needs of individual client groups and sometimes of individual members within groups, have been one factor said to inhibit the development of common indicators or systems. Another, probably more important factor, has been the varied and voluntary nature of participation in programmes that are outside formal systems and their frequent lack of relevance to competitive labour market entry. The fact that many such projects are strapped for cash may also be significant.

Assumptions relating to common procedures

So far then, there is an assumption that there is an established conceptual framework of procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of educational development. Under certain conditions, notably in formal education, it is possible to identify standardised indicators of performance in the substantive element of a programme. It excludes measure of attitudinal change.

Feasibility

With careful planning, it would appear feasible to introduce not only common procedures, also outcome measures for the monitoring and evaluation of substantively similar, non-formal, adult basic education projects if they were administered by a single agency or government

department within a country. It might also work in countries with established networks for the exchange of information between organisations sponsoring similar projects. Between countries, there would seem to be little problem in the mutually beneficial sharing of experience between similar field projects, if they are sponsored by the same international agency, but there would be difficulty in identifying common indicators of performance. Effective in-country, inter-organisational networks would ensure the communication of such information to the executives of different international agencies in their countries of origin. The lateral exchange of such information between them seems to be more problematic at this level.

Historical specificity

It would be wrong to put a case for the monitoring and evaluation of adult literacy and basic education, without some allusion to the historical context in which it is being made. It would be difficult to divorce the current interest in the monitoring and evaluation of adult literacy and basic education from the preoccupation with the assessment of learning in formal education that reemerged in the mid-1970s. This was first manifest in the US and later in the UK in, for example, research undertaken by the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU). The APU endeavoured to set attainment criteria, by subject, for children of different ages.

These trends are inseparable from the demand for enterprise accountability in business and government that has been expressed since the start of the recession. This has coincided with the diminishing importance of welfarism and the return to the market as arbiter of the distribution of social well-being.

Moving from project and programme levels to the wider social context, the purpose of educational monitoring and evaluation, and so the form that they take, is intimately related to assumptions about the purposes that will be served by the educational endeavour. Any change in these assumptions will affect programme development and so evaluation. Further, in this case, it is critical to understand the social and political implications, and their implications for monitoring and evaluation, of the different structural positions (in relation to the state and to the labour market) of so-called formal initial education for young people and the range of designated non-formal opportunities available to adults (see, for example, Labelle, 1985; Bacchus, et al., 1990). Intrinsic to this is an understanding of the various interpretations of the interaction between language, literacy and numeracy and social change and their implications for monitoring and evaluation (see, for example, Street, 1986).

In sum, the arguments for the monitoring and evaluation of adult literacy and basic education programmes are no different from those justifying monitoring and evaluation in terms of any other educational scheme. It is the priority and status accorded different programmes that is likely to determine commitment to their internal and external evaluation and the form that these take.

II. THE FAILURE TO ADOPT COMMON PROCEDURES TO DATE

Referring only to the case of adult literacy and basic education programmes, there are many explanations for not identifying common procedures for their monitoring and evaluation. They are expressed in terms of complexities at programme and project levels and, as such, imply limitations of evaluatory procedures. The most commonly cited refer to inter-programme and project variations. Less commonly addressed is the failure of planners to develop project monitoring systems as part of the pre-planning and design stage of project development, while efforts to appraise the quality of such evaluations as are undertaken and to assess their applicability to the future adoption of common procedures are rare. Even more unusual have been attempts to draw inferences for formal evaluation from the lack of definitional and objective clarity of many adult literacy and basic educational programmes. These arguably underlie many of the above deterrents to common evaluatory procedures.

PROGRAMME AND PROJECT DIFFERENCES

Philosophical specificity of literacy and basic educational programmes

Variations in the philosophy according to which programmes are developed is one explanation for the lack of common cross-programme procedures. The measures used to assess processes and outcomes of courses intended to impart nothing more than the techniques of reading, writing and numeracy, unrelated to the contexts in which they might be used, might be said to be different from those which should be used in, for example, the case of functional literacy programmes, In these, learners are oriented to literacy and numeracy through the practical application of their skills in productive environments. Similarly, manifest differences in the approach to monitoring and evaluation might be expected between these schemes and those in which the acquisition of skills of literacy and numeracy is part of an awareness raising political programme of popular education.

Clearly, against this it would be argued that any broadly applicable evaluatory scheme would seek to identify common inputs, processes and results across projects, even when motivated by very different philosophies.

Project specificity within programmes

If there appear to be strong reasons for the non-adoption of common approaches to monitoring and evaluation procedures across programmes, the growing importance of contextual relevance in literacy and basic education teaching, as a prerequisite for sustained participant motivation, has meant that individual projects within a programme may be very different, even within the same country. During the period of fundamental basic education, following World War II, it was policy for literacy training to be used as a vehicle for the transmission of what was seen to be desired social and technical knowledge (Unesco, 1949). In the Unesco Experimental World Literacy Programme, 1969-1974, functional literacy projects in Iran alone were oriented at people expecting to work in agricultural production, textiles, steel manufacturing and irrigation, theoretically in accordance with defined local skill needs (Jones, 1988). Likewise,

popular education initiatives across Latin America emerge with community action to meet specific local needs. Each differs from the next in its rationale, mode of organisation and in the place of literacy and basic education within its sphere of activities. In common, their participants would claim to eschew formalism (Archer and Costello, 1990). The decentralisation of control of the context in which literacy and basic skill teaching is located, which explains the extent of diversification within programmes or between projects within them espousing the same philosophies, would appear to preclude the possibilities of developing common approaches of monitoring and evaluation procedures at the substantive level.

The basis of this argument is that it would be ideologically and andragogically unsound to try, and in any case not possible, for a performance monitoring system to restrict itself to what might be called the context-free measurement of participant ability to use the core skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. On these grounds, it is differences in the substantive medium in which skill training is embedded which are said to inhibit the development of common assessment procedures.

Against this position, is the argument that the application of skills within a single environment does not imply dominance of those skills. It is their transferability to other environments which would indicate overall competency and which should be susceptible to evaluation.

Diversity of teaching methods

Inseparable from the variations in philosophy of literacy and basic education programmes is the diversity of teaching methods used in different programmes and in projects within them.

Over time, the evolution of teaching and learning theories have combined with political and economic exigencies that favour local control of non-formal schemes. This has encouraged the development of learner-oriented, participatory approaches to teaching. The trend has been away from what have been described as the traditional methods of educational progress, based on the internal logic of cumulative skills in conjunction with a pattern of division between subjects and a separation of theory and practice (Hamadache and Martin, 1986). This school-type model, developed according to centralist policy, typically with professionally trained teachers and uniform materials, is now rejected in favour of more functional objective or problem-oriented approaches. With these, projects are developed out of an analysis of local needs, the purposes for which the skills are to be acquired and an understanding of related training and knowledge required for skill application. It is insufficient to teach the formalities of letter writing without skill in the style of address appropriate to different contexts or information about the mechanisms of transmission and response. Teaching that literacy will enable self-sufficiency and development should be supported by discussion and information about the ways in which action might be taken to this end. Closely related, particularly in consciousness raising approaches, is the extent to which the starting point of any individual's participation is the psycho-social dimensions of their own reality.

Implications for the principles of teaching

Just as there is no one method for selecting the substantive medium through which the skills of literacy and basic education shall be transmitted, so there is no one model which governs the principles according to which this medium is articulated to the deconstructed components of the skills that are to be acquired. Variations in andragogical principle (convergence, integration, diversification and participation would be examples) and in the processes used in the preparation, production and dissemination of teaching materials, would appear to militate against the identification of common approaches to monitoring and evaluation.

Debates on methods of teaching literacy and numeracy

A further complexity which has implications for monitoring and evaluation is the diversity of beliefs about the most effective ways to teach literacy and numeracy skills. Cumulative skill mastery using a so-called synthetic approach, based on alphabet learning, phonetics or syllable recognition, did not disappear with the development of semantically grounded analytic methods. Instead, the trend is to use an eclectic method which combines elements of the two approaches. This entails the selection of graded words, sentences and passages which are analysed, compared and synthesised simultaneously (Hamadache and Martin, 1986). Within this diversity, is the endless variation of oral and written exercises which are used to teach and consolidate the understanding of individual components and processes of language as it is written. Similar diversity obtains in the range of methods used in teaching of principles of number and the extent to which this is integrated in literacy work.

Teacher issues

Decisions at whatever level about the philosophy of the programme, the principles of teaching and learning to be endorsed and the practical techniques to be used have direct implications for the kind of people who will be chosen to facilitate such schemes and their preparation for this work. Again, everywhere, diversity is the norm.

In nearly all countries, it is unusual for those who are to teach adults reading, writing and basic numeracy to be qualified adult educators. Most frequently, they are volunteers who may have had no training or only rudimentary training. In less developed parts of the world, they may be primary school teachers, attracted to the work by altruism and supplements to their pay.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, this has two implications. Firstly, those planning evaluation schemes should moderate their expectations of the formal competencies of teachers. Secondly, since at the classroom level, teachers will be critical in collecting information for the evaluation process, the requirements to be placed on them in this respect must take account of this competency and where possible relevant training be given. This has further implications for the training of trainers.

Language

Any proposals for developing common monitoring and evaluation procedures must be able to overcome the problems that would be encountered by the range of languages used as the medium of communication in projects. These are likely to vary not only from

country to country, but from one population group to another within the same country and, not infrequently within the same programme.

A further complication is the extent to which account should be taken of learner familiarity with the language being used as the medium through which to acquire literacy and basic educational skills. Learners may be native speakers, non-native speakers or, a third category, non-speakers of the language. Instructors may be or not native speakers of the medium of communication, and they may or may not be speakers of learners' native tongue.

These variations derive from cultural diversities between language groups. They inevitably affect interpretations of the learning experience in different ways.

Definitional problems

A final factor which impedes moves to promote common procedures for the monitoring of literacy and other basic adult education programmes is the difficulty in setting criteria which indicate that a particular level of literacy, numeracy or other basic education has been attained. This is hardly surprising in the light of the diverse approaches to literacy and basic education that are apparent at all levels within and between programmes. It means that there is no agreement about whether to be literate implies the ability to react appropriately to selected course material, random published material (newspapers, medicine bottles, street instructions, etc) in writing or other behaviours.

This definitional problem is unlikely to disappear with the growing media challenge to reading and writing as the dominant channels of mass communication. Reading and writing abilities have always carried connotations about social status and aspirations within societies, discriminating against those who have not acquired them. Mass preference for decoding and sometimes encoding messages through electronic media seems likely over time to make conventional literacy, based on reading and writing, more, not less, socially restrictive. It poses major new questions for the definition of literacy and so for measurement procedures related to it.

In sum

There is no denying this diversity of context and content between projects and programmes, but it would wrong to claim that it was unique to those involved with adult education. It certainly symptomises the complexity of any attempt that might be made to construct standard measures of process or performance in all but the most nearly identical of adult basic educational schemes. However, it is possible to conceive of common procedures for monitoring and evaluation of other, equally diverse, educational projects and programmes, or projects in general, then it is also technically conceivable in this case. Explanations for its non-introduction to date have to be sought in other arenas.

PLANNING AND AGENCY FAILURES

Awareness and expertise

There are many explanations for agency and government failure to introduce systematic project and programme monitoring and evaluation procedures. They include a lack of awareness of the relevance of monitoring for effective project execution and of the importance of evaluation to future policy formulation, including programme and project planning. Lack of expertise in incorporating monitoring and evaluation procedures from the preplanning stage of project design and failure to budget the necessary resource allocations to support them are also common. Fear of the outcomes of such appraisal is another deterrent to its execution, as are the political interests in arenas seemingly far removed from it.

Priorities

However unsystematic monitoring and evaluation procedures may be, it is difficult to imagine any project where none were applied. Probably the most formal requirement in schemes developed without a logical planning framework, which provides at all levels for monitoring and evaluation, is the requirement for field or country officers to account for project expenditure. Such reports are likely to involve an appraisal of the efficiency of logistical support (needs assessment analysis, teacher-training and appointments, the designing of course structure, materials production and distribution). The priority accorded such organisational evaluation implies a concern less with project effectiveness or effects than with agency reputation and reproduction.

The closest these studies may come to the appraisal of short-term project effects is likely to be in reports compiled on the basis of surrogate variables. These would include old friends, such as student enrolment and participation and teacher attendance rates. This does not mean that assessment of performance is not undertaken, at least of student performance. However, because its outcomes are not included in field reports concerned with budgetary accountability and the need to present an image of project viability, it constitutes a process of semi-formal or informal monitoring. Exercises relating to particular topics within a course enable learners to appraise their own understanding. Periodic quick tests serve the same end and provide teachers with feed back on learner development and, hopefully, on their own performance.

More informal yet is what has been described as natural monitoring (Kinsey, 1983). In this people reflect on their thoughts and behaviour, in this case learners and teachers, in relation to the project or programme in question, and take action, sometimes unconsciously, to rectify perceived deficiencies.

Requirement

At issue then is the identification of mechanisms by which this informal monitoring and evaluation of different aspects of project performance can be combined with the organisational implementation appraisals and converted into more formal procedures of evaluation of inputs, processes and effects, without undue complexity.

STRUCTURAL BLOCKAGES TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH SYSTEMS IN THE CASE OF ADULT LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

A third inhibitor to the development of formal systems of monitoring and evaluation relates to the purposes served by the programmes and their status in the eyes of government, agencies and participants. Non-obligatory participation, voluntary or tokenly paid teachers, promotion by non-government organisations, lack of official recognition of performance levels and non-marketable qualifications, individually reduce the standing of the schemes with which they are associated. In aggregate the effect is greater. This is confirmed by the limited resource allocation to adult and continuing education in those countries that do develop national programmes, and their early suppression in the face of budgetary constraints. This decision may be taken as a result of local initiative, or at the insistence of external funding agencies, such as the World Bank. It is also confirmed by failure on the part of government and sponsoring organisations to act upon such evaluation is undertaken.

Ultimately, it is likely to be these structural constraints and their expression in political will, or lack of it, that will explain the infrequency and lack of system in procedures of monitoring and evaluation in respect of adult and basic educational programmes for adults. Programme level obstacles, as argued above, are common to formal education schemes and other projects, are of themselves insufficient deterrents.

III. MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES IN RESPECT OF ADULT AND BASIC EDUCATION SCHEMES

Notwithstanding all this, there have been many approaches to the evaluation of literacy and basic educational programmes, although most recent researchers lament the infrequency of systematic appraisal. This is not a complaint directed primarily at projects in less developed parts of the world, but also at those set up in advanced industrial and post-industrial societies (Holland, 1989; Lind, 1986).

Equivalency and competency

From the early schemes, in the US and elsewhere, which set grade levels equivalent to those for reading, writing and basic numeracy in schools, there came a shift to the assessment of adult competency, involving literacy and basic education in a series of life simulating contexts. In the US, this included the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Kirsch, 1990). In neither the equivalency nor the competency approaches, was it deemed relevant to control for contextual influences on the acquisition and performance of literacy skills. Also, it quickly became clear that there were multiple problems of verisimilitude and control in attempts at evaluation of realistic functionality.

Context and functionality

This criticism was fundamental in the case of the Unesco Experimental World Literacy Project (EWLP) that was introduced in 6 countries between 1965 and 1974. It was intended not only to test the hypothesis that education for adults had a positive effect on social

and economic well-being, but to construct and test procedures for monitoring and evaluation that would be applicable within specific countries and projects. The scheme was to be flexible enough to allow for project and context variations, (as described in section II above), but sufficiently compatible for cross-programme or cross-national comparison (Jones, 1988).

The proposal failed for many reasons, starting with problems of achieving a common definition of literacy between countries and the difficulties in standardising evaluation procedures in different parts of the world. The quality of data that was collected from project to project and from country to country, was not sufficiently robust to stand such analysis. This was in part because of international organisation insensitivity to the implications of local variations in implementation and context. As with the NAEP in the US, criticism was also levelled at the inadequacy of the appraisal of functionality in the evaluation of the EWLP (Jones, 1988; Unesco, 1976).

When, eventually, attempts were made to systematically measure literacy and numeracy skills in simulated contexts, using a criterion sampling approach, tests were found difficult to construct and control, very expensive and only partially effective. Other conventional tests were needed to supplement the information that could not be gathered in the simulated test environment (Shavelson, et al., 1985). A further criticism was that this form of assessment was unable to provide information on processes of project implementation and how they had affected learning.

Participation and process

That is not to say that all of the EWLP studies overlooked this dimension. In Mali, the use of a participative approach to monitoring the literacy and basic skills educational programme that was developed in association with a ground nut development scheme used ipsative and criterion referencing techniques which provided information to learners, teachers and administrators, including trainers. Booklets and forms were prepared and piloted before the evaluation date so that teachers were confident about their use. Open meetings were held to discuss the observations made about processes, and ways to improve them and also about outcomes, in terms of learning achievements and other effects (Easton, 1985).

A substantial Hawthorne effect was observed as a consequence of this participatory evaluation, with significant increases in enrolment and retention. These waned after a time if it was felt that participant proposals for project implementation modification were being ignored, in favour of those put forward by staff. The triangulation of data by the project evaluation team enabled some test of the reliability of the information gathered from teachers and learners using test forms and questionnaires. As an aside, the project's observation of the limited scope for using the skills learned in the classes in community development activities and the resulting hypothesis about the numbers of people with literacy skills required by any population group should be further investigated.

Complexity

The laborious efforts made by the EWLP to create evaluation systems that were applicable across countries and programmes identified a series of 167 indicators for the measurement of project performance. Of these, 11 were described as mandatory and 9 as recommended. They included the ratios of inscription, drop-out, attendance, time utilisation, skills achieved, knowledge acquired, skill use, change in learner productive activities, changes in use of consumer durables, schooling of participant children, understanding of health, hygiene and nutrition.

Leaving to one side the consumer orientations of this list, which confirm the ideology of the EWLP, none of the indicators took account either of information about the process of project implementation or the processes of learning that had contributed to observed performance. Nor did they, or the other schemes to which reference has been made, attempt to appraise the extent to which the outcomes of projects are other than the acquisition of formal skills and their application in economically productive environments.

Psycho-social dynamics

Content analysis of learner and tutor accounts of their experience has identified five categories of psycho-social effects of literacy programmes on adults in Britain, all of whom had attended school as children. In oral accounts they ranked as affective personal achievements, affective social achievements, socio-economic achievements, cognitive achievements and enactive achievements. In written accounts cognitive achievements moved into second place (Charnley and Jones, 1979).

The recognition of the need to perceive as positive both affective and cognitive outcomes of programmes has been accompanied by attempts to constructively appraise contextual processes which enhance project execution and learning. Learner oriented, these are at the levels of learners, teachers and organisations and seek to take account of the interaction between them (Holland, 1990).

Profiling

Devices used to assess these multiple endeavours include standardised tests of knowledge and skill and procedures for their application, centre reports which, completed by teachers, provide basic statistics and information about centre activities. More recently, in an effort for students to monitor their own progress towards objectives that they have set themselves, Profile Progress packages have been prepared which it is hoped will contribute to sustained learner motivation (Holland, 1989, 1990). Similar check-lists to monitor the fulfilment of administrative and teaching commitments have been proposed for literacy and basic educational schemes administered by local government authorities in Britain (Wells, et al., 1991). It is too soon to appraise their usefulness in their intended environments. In less developed countries, it is unlikely that literacy and basic education schemes would have available the funds to produce such monitoring materials or that, beyond the centres to which they refer, there will be staff capable to collate information from reports in clusters of centres. This is not to descry the worthiness of the scheme, but to identify obstacles that would need to be overcome in other contexts.

Core indicators

In common to all of the evaluation schemes referred to above is their inclusion of assessment of the acquisition of the core skills of literacy and basic numeracy. This is regardless of the andragogic tradition which they espouse and of the variations in definitions of the skills that represent a state of literacy or numeracy. Exceptions are likely to be found in those conscientization programmes which may eschew formal literacy training and also, more commonly, evaluation, about which therefore little is known.

A second feature, explicit in some cases, is the need for careful planning of any evaluation that, at some point, will require the transmission of information about teachers and learners and the interaction between them to interested parties outside their place of meeting. Principles to guide this planning procedure change over time. In fashion today are those of participation and reinforcement, as reported in the Mali evaluation and strongly present in the process of profiling. Other principles to be endorsed are simplicity, information minimalisation and cheapness.

Finally, from the critiques of the EWLP has come a list of practical prerequisites for any evaluatory procedures intended to be used in comparative contexts. They are: a common set of indicators; the unification of evaluation terminology; similarity of formal characteristics of instrumentation (methods and techniques); a common approach to the treatment of the collected data....(Jones, 1988).

In sum

Given that formal evaluation is a process intended to enhance organisational efficiency and effectiveness, its appropriateness to schemes that claim to reject formalism may be challenged. However, in this there appear to be certain contradictions. All education is concerned with changing the ways in which people think and behave. Similarly, other than informal learning, all education, including that labelled non formal or consciousness raising education, is realised through organised activities which are usually described as projects or programmes. As such, given the definition of what constitutes a project, the scope for their evaluation is the same.

A further commonality, is the goal, as opposed to the immediate objectives, of programmes which appear to endorse different philosophies and approaches to teaching. Social and economic well-being, the alleviation of poverty, access to the means of subsistence and education are goals of most educational schemes and will be stated as such by participants, teachers and providers around the world. It is assumptions about the dynamic for such convergence of thinking and about the most suitable ways to achieve the goal which vary. These produce not variations in the types of vehicle in which, in this case, educational goods are transported, but in the substantive medium in which the skills to be acquired are embedded. Once again therefore, it becomes possible to see how the principles underlying the monitoring and evaluation of projects may be the same.

These structural commonalities suggest, beyond the outcome rhetorics and myths of development and personal well-being, that all such schemes are fruits of the same ideology. The logic of capital requires alienation from non-capitalist cultures, endorsement of consumerism and the willingness to sell labour for income. The

schooling of children has long been accepted as being instrumental in this process and now writers on adult and non-formal education are treating it from similar perspectives (Bacchus, et al. 1990). Awareness of this makes it possible to accept the argument for the application of similar evaluatory procedures in programmes with seemingly different philosophies. In this, evaluation itself contributes to the process.

IV. PROJECTS, PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES: TOWARDS A COMMON APPROACH TO EVALUATION

We seem to have reached the point of recognising that the only legitimate commonality in approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of adult basic education programmes has to be at the conceptual level and not at the practical level of the evaluation process. At this level of generality, the continuing failure to adopt common models becomes questionable.

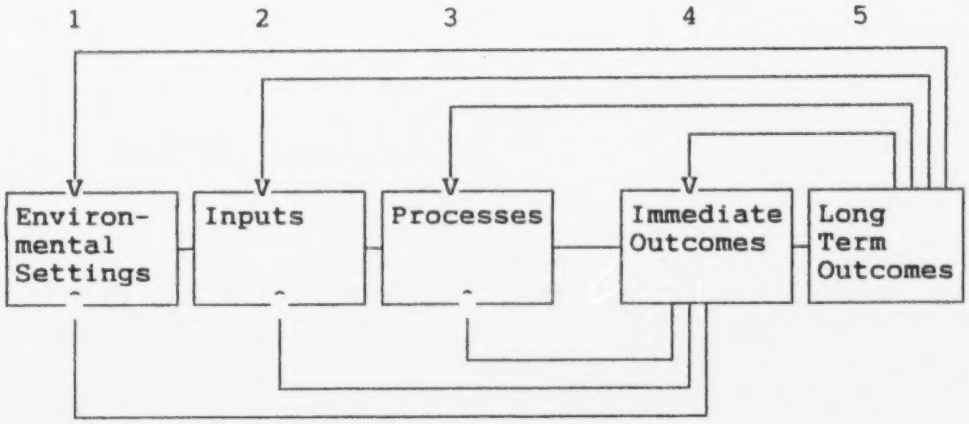
Projects are normally located within clearly defined policy cycles. This means that plans for the monitoring and evaluation of project and programme design and implementation, whether administered by government or non-government agencies, should include the appraisal of their expected contribution to the fulfilment of stated sectoral objectives and, at a higher level, to national development goals. This will be achieved by aggregating the effects of the project on individual participants and others affected by the scheme. It will also to allow the appraisal of the adequacy of project resources and the processes associated with their use.

Fig. 1: Logical planning matrix

Summary of Objectives/ Activities	Objectively Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions
Overall Goal			
Project Purpose			
Results/ Outputs			
Activities a) n)			

Source: GTZ (1990)

Fig. 2 The EIPOL process*



KEY

1. Environmental setting: analyses of historical and current situation in socio-economic, educational and other domains; assessment of needs and priorities; appraisal of resources and potentialities.

2. Inputs: material inputs; non-material inputs.

3. Processes: management processes; teaching and learning processes.

4. Immediate Outcomes: intermediary outcomes; learning outcomes.

5. Long-range effects: on the educational domain; on the socio-economic domain.

Fig. 3 The EIPOL grid*

	Stages of built-in evaluation system				
	Enivron-mental setting	Inputs	Pro-cesses	Immed-iate Outcomes	Long-term Effects
Stages of project cycle					
Pre-planning					
Planning					
Implementation					
Assimilation					

*Source: Dave (1980)

In theory, the careful use of a device such as a logical planning matrix permits the verification that this is being done. It can provide for the appraisal of all aspects of project design and implementation, including the original assessment of the needs being addressed and the identification of possible problems. (GTZ, 1990).

Within such a framework a further matrix may be constructed in which the evaluation of various elements at different stages of project planning and implementation may be developed. An EIPOL grid is one such approach (Dave, 1980). In this, the evaluation designed at the pre-planning, planning, implementation and assimilation stages of the project accounts for the analysis of the environmental setting of the project, inputs, processes, outcomes and long-range effects (Figs. 2 and 3). Use of such a scheme would ensure, for example, that due account was taken at the preplanning stage, of factors identified by earlier researchers as having a significant contribution to project enhancement. This would include consideration of, for example, the appropriateness of Bellahsene's literacy project implementation systems (Bellahsene, 1973) and reference to Roger Couvert's explanatory models of the demographic, social and economic dynamics of relations within learner groups and between them and teachers (Fig. 4, Couvert, 1979). It might also seek to appraise the usefulness of Bhola's model of the interdependence of programme, evaluation and data systems in literacy project monitoring and evaluation (Bhola, 1979).

Although popular with funding agencies, there are problems with the use of such matrices. As described, they enable coherent appraisals of project development in relation to plans and objectives, but they do not specify the structure of relationships between those who are to participate in the process of evaluation. They appear to be tools for administrators and planners and less devices which will enable formative recommendations during the course of project development to those in the field.

In practice, the potential for design flexibility is present within either of the two schemes above. Nevertheless, it would seem beneficial to introduce a further dimension to the model which allows ipsative evaluation at each level, as well as systematic cross-level appraisal. In this way, in keeping with the contemporary concerns with participation, arrangements can be made to ensure communication between all actors in the process of project development and discussion and action as appropriate, in response to information obtained through the evaluation.

As indicated in Fig. 5, there is scope for the planning of self evaluation by actors with different roles in project development. Box A1, for example, permits learner self appraisal. The form which this might take will depend on the type of project and its purpose, but it might include: self appraisal of cognitive skills, in terms of performance in exercises and tests; account of non-cognitive effects of learning and programme participation; identification of performance obstacles and enhancers. The frequency of such appraisal, beyond natural appraisal, would again be by agreement with other interested parties, teachers and administrators (including trainers). In cell B2 teachers would appraise their own performance in terms of strategic planning achievements and learner responsiveness.

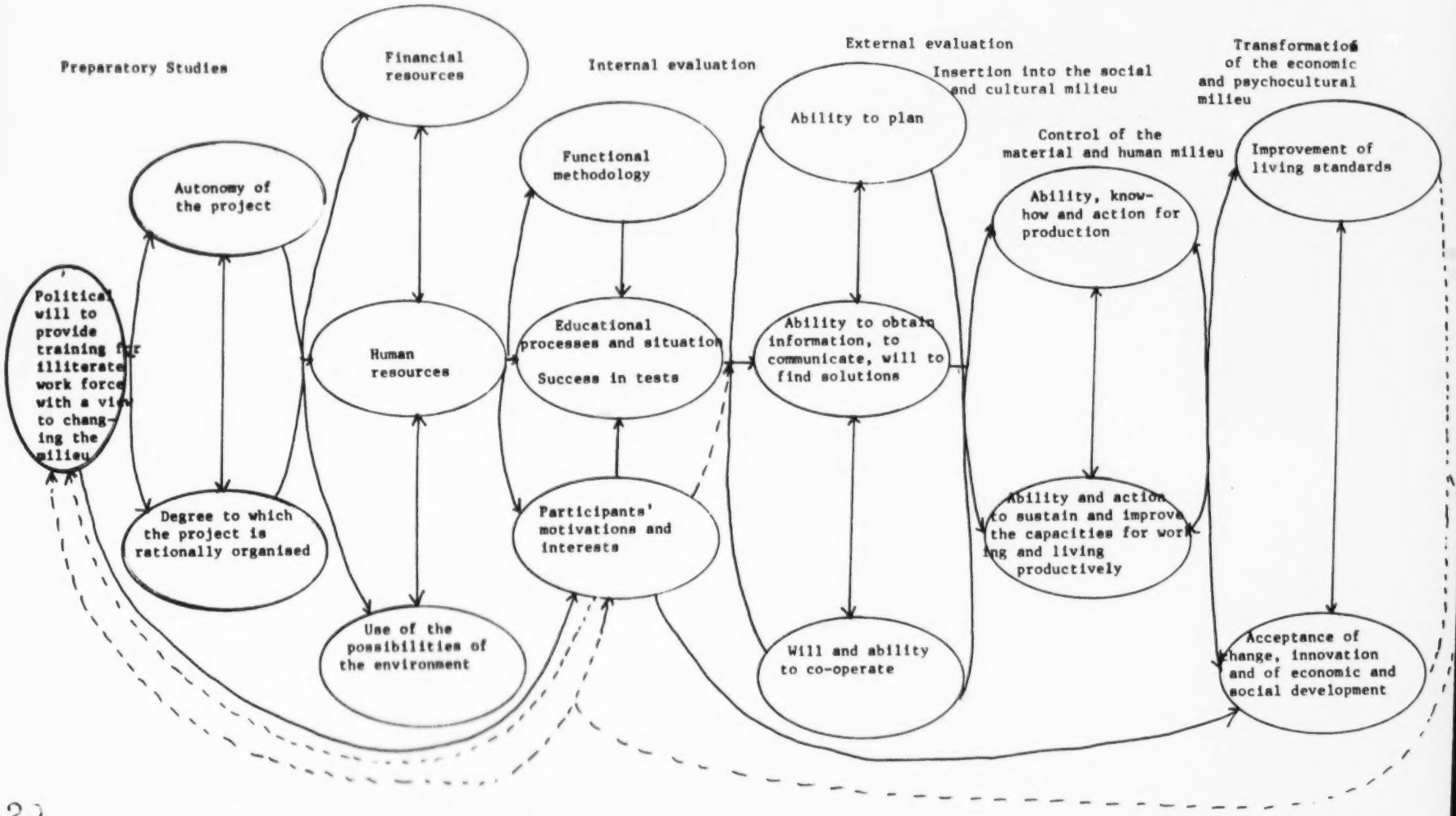
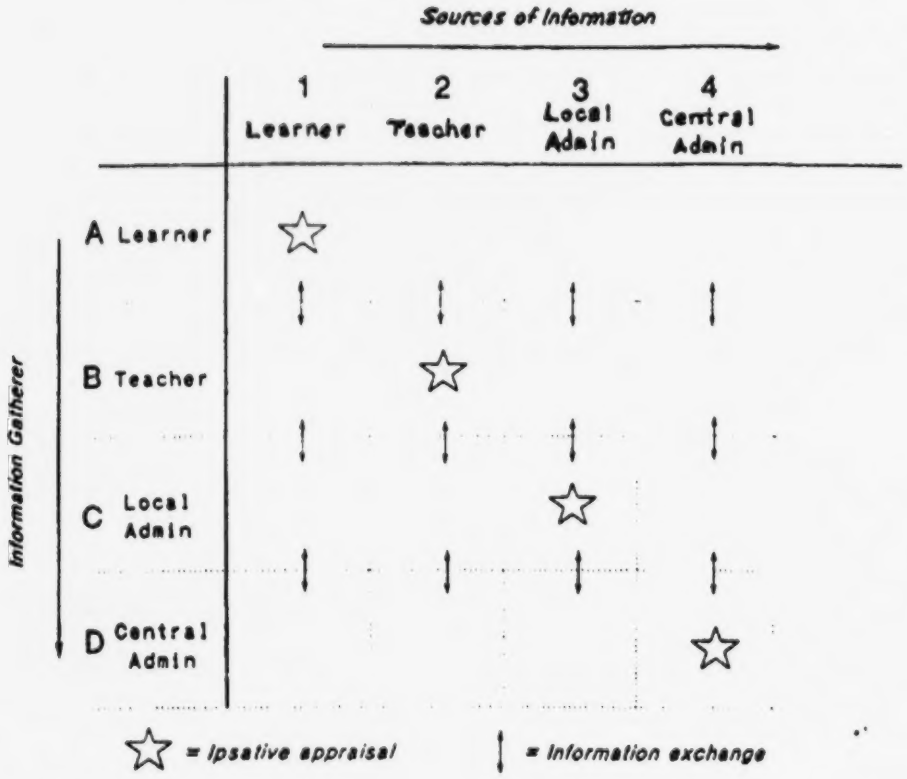

Preparatory Studies
Financial resources
Internal evaluation
External evaluation
Insertion into the social and cultural milieu
Transformation of the economic and psychocultural milieu
Ability to plan
Functional methodology
Control of the material and human milieu
Improvement of living standards
Autonomy of the project
Ability, know-how and action for production
Political will to provide training for illiterate work force with a view to changing the milieu
Human resources
Educational processes and situation
Success in tests
Ability to obtain information, to communicate, will to find solutions
Degree to which the project is rationally organised
Participants' motivations and interests
Ability and action to sustain and improve the capacities for working and living productively
Use of the possibilities of the environment
Will and ability to co-operate
Acceptance of change, innovation and of economic and social development

Figure 4. Conceptual diagram of the functional literacy process. Source: Couvert 1979

Fig. 5 Framework for the flexible integration of participatory and other internal programme evaluation



In cell A2, learners would appraise the adequacy in quantity and quality of teaching inputs, teacher performance and material aids for example, again at agreed regularity. In cell A3 they would do the same in respect of whatever contact they may have with programme administrators. Although unlikely for the majority, any contact with central administration would receive the same treatment in respect of cell A4.

This activity would enable actors consciously to appraise their position in relation to those others with whom they have contact (along the horizontal access). It would also ensure the exchange of information between levels: from learners to teachers and back; from field administration to teachers and back and from the field to the centre and back.

The way information was to be collected in each cell would vary from project to project, and according to the needs for information of participants at different levels in the process. It would without doubt need careful planning, to ensure that a combination of performance, attitudinal and explanatory data were provided (while respecting the principles of clarity, cost-effectiveness and minimal intrusion).

The project diversity factor makes more precise recommendations for standardising monitoring and evaluation procedures (such as performance indicators) at project level, irrelevant at this stage. A nesting of planning frameworks, such as that suggested, combined with the flexi-framework outlined in fig 5., ensures that the general procedures are applicable at the programme level, in such a way that project planners and administrators can apply them to specific situations. Only after satisfactory schemes have been developed would there be a case for seeking to test their cross-programme/cross-national applicability.

Caution

There is nothing new in this kind of thinking. Further, there is a danger that in the bid for comprehensiveness, the implementation of such a scheme can become complex and saturated in data to the extent that clarity of observation is lost. If the scheme is to be applied, the planning should ensure that information about it is incorporated simply and clearly into the training of the trainers and passed on in the training of field administrators and teachers.

The piloting of the scheme in such a way as to produce useful measures without mega-technical statistical complexity will also require creative planning according to some reliable procedure for evaluation project planning (Programme evaluation and review technique (PERT) or Gantt spring to mind (Cook, 1966; Clark, 1952). It goes with out saying that any such formal planning for the evaluation of literacy and basic education projects, should at the pre-planning stage be clear about its purposes and the ways in which its results will eventually be used.

Benefits?

If such procedures were piloted and found to have applicability across projects and programmes it would be on account of their users decision to provide quick and succinct information derived from all actors in project development. This would meet today's requirement of

maximal participation in decision-making and of ensuring the multi-way flow of information between different spheres of implementation activity. To encourage the widespread adoption of the procedures it would be necessary, during and after pilot studies of the viability of the scheme, to give as much publicity as possible to its virtues. Not only would this encourage funding agencies to look favourably on projects which include it, it may mean that, in time, monitoring and evaluation became accepted by practitioners as intrinsic to project design and implementation.

V. DISCUSSION

Proposing a scheme by which actors have a part in systematically reviewing all stages of a literacy or basic education project and its contribution to wider sectoral objectives is consonant with contemporary promotion of social planning processes. In these, local identification of needs and initiation of action to meet them are seen as critical factors in the achievement of individual or social well-being (Conyers, 1982; Midgley, et al. 1986).

In theory, such participation might imply, as an ultimate goal, a previously unimagined state of well-being requiring hitherto unknown fulfilment strategies. In practice, images of well-being tend to be familiar. They are firmly embedded in contemporary ideology and the political economy from which this derives. What varies is the priority which different individuals or groups give at any point in time to the achievement of the pre-requisite components of this well-being, for themselves and/or for others. Simplistically, it may be irrelevant for a government or agency to promote literacy or basic education in a community currently more concerned with those parts of well-being that can be enhanced with improvements to its water supply.

Clearly, it is conceivable that there is a structure to the prioritisation of organised activities intended to promote well-being. Within this, clusters of activities of similar priority may be realised at the same time, as part of a coordinated plan or randomly. Watersheds may be reached at which new skills have to be acquired, which of themselves may have little impact on well-being, to enable the development of more complex activities. Examples of such enabling skills include literacy and basic education. They also include the organisational capacity to plan, undertake and follow-up action (themselves often dependent on some educational skills).

The logic of social planning would seem to be that the community can identify its needs and find the appropriate resources (locally or elsewhere) to fulfil them, on the assumption that such resources are available and can be acquired. The weakness of the argument for autochtonous action is that, in a context in which well-being is predicated upon participation in market capitalism with its hierarchical division of labour, action to meet a particular need using external resources is triggered by knowledge that those resources exist, because someone in the community (native or newcomer) has experience of them elsewhere and is actively promoting them. Symbiotically, the dynamic of capital in this respect is to encourage

such action as will increase the peripheral market. The boundary between doing this responsively or proactively is notoriously blurred.

Once engaged, even in the least integrated of communities, even as a result of the most participatory of initiatives, even in the least production-oriented of activities, there is a requirement for resource administration and accountability. Each of these, however effectively performed, whether in the interests of the receiver or the provider, implies the application of market-oriented rationality and so its internalisation. Given the number of well-being oriented activities conducted simultaneously in any community, the aggregate effect of these experiences on thinking and behaviour will be considerable (Preston, 1987).

In all these processes, identification of the source of initiative (local or external) becomes impossible. Empowerment derives from understanding this impossibility and its implications for goal achievement.

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